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| 10/608,300 | 06/27/2003 | Srinivas Doddi | 509982005500 | 9021 |

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| EXAMINER | |
|---|---|
| BROWN JR, NATHAN H | |

| ART UNIT | PAPER NUMBER |
|---|---|
| 2121 | |

DATE MAILED: 02/15/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

| Office Action Summary | Application No. | Applicant(s) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 10/608,300 | DODDI ET AL. | |
| | Examiner | Art Unit | |
| | Nathan H. Brown, Jr. | 2121 | |

*-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --*

**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE *(3)* MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on *06 January 2006*.

2a)☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b)☒ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

4)☒ Claim(s) *1-29* is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) *1-29* is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a)☐ All b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ .
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) ☐ Other: _____.

# Examiner's Detailed Office Action

1. This Office Action is responsive to the communication for application 10/608,300, filed January 6, 2006.

2. Claims 1-29 have been examined.

3. Applicant's request for the withdrawal of the rejection of claim 8 under 35 USC 112, 1st paragraph is granted.

## Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. Claims 1-6, 11-14, and 16-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Singh et al.* (USPN 6650422 B2) in view of *Wormington et al.* (USPN 6,192,103 B1).

Regarding claim 1. *Singh et al.* describe a method of examining a structure formed on a semiconductor wafer (*see* col. 2, lines 14-17), the method comprising: obtaining a first diffraction signal measured using a metrology device (*see* col. 3, lines 8-12); obtaining a second diffraction signal (*see* col. 3, lines 12-15); comparing the first and second diffraction signals (*see*

col. 3, lines 12-15); and when the first and second diffraction signals match within a matching criterion, determining a feature of the structure based on the one or more parameters or the profile (*see* col. 3, lines 15-17). *Singh et al.* do not describe obtaining a second diffraction signal generated using a machine learning system, wherein the machine learning system receives as an input one or more parameters that characterize a profile of the structure to generate the second diffraction signal. *Wormington et al.* describe obtaining a second diffraction signal generated using such a machine learning system (*see*, Fig. 6 and col. 8, lines 37-40 and col. 5, lines 50-62, *Examiner asserts that genetic and evolutionary algorithms are machine learning algorithms.*). It would have been obvious at the time the invention was made, to persons having ordinary skill in the art, to combine *Singh et al.* with *Wormington et al.* to construct the reflectance signature database with virtually no user intervention (*see* col. 4, lines 8-15).

Regarding claims 2-3. *Singh et al.* describe the method, further comprising: prior to generating the second diffraction signal, training the machine learning system using a set of training input data and a set of training output data, wherein each of the training input data is a profile of the structure characterized by one or more parameters, and wherein each of the training output data is a diffraction signal corresponding to the profile of the structure (*see* col. 9, lines 7-13).

Regarding claim 3. Selecting the set of training input data from a range of profiles of the structure is inherent in the method in that: prior to using the machine learning system (that is a neural network) it must to be trained. Further, the training input and output data must be selected

before training can be conducted. Singh teaches that the database of signatures associated with known feature profiles maybe utilized to input training data (*see* col. 9, lines 8-10).

Regarding claim 4. Singh teaches dividing the range of profiles into two partitions. (*see* col.2, lines 25-36). Hence it is inherent to choose two machine-learning systems to learn both partitions under the context set forth by Singh using selected input training data described in claim 3.

Regarding claims 5-6. The admitted prior art on page 1 of the specification [0003]states that the diffraction beam (the output training data) can be analyzed using modeling techniques such as wave analysis.

Regarding claims 11-12. Singh uses the first diffraction signal to compare with profiles in database (col. 3, lines 10-16). Singh also states that the database can be use to train a neural network (col. 9, lines 7-15) that will replace database to generate diffraction signals to compare.

Regarding claims 13-14. Official notice is taken that metrology device is used to measure structure such as ellipsometer using dimension measurement such as n and k values. (See U.S. Patent 5,793,480. col. 2, lin.35-42)

Regarding claims 16-29. Claims 16-21 are computer program claims that implement method claims 1-15 using instruction code and claims 22-29 are systems claims that implement method

claims 1-15 using various devices and computers. Therefore claims 16-21 and claims 22-29 are rejected under the same rationale as cited in the rejection of rejected claims 1-15.

6. Claims 9-10 and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Singh et al.* in view of *Wormington et al.* and further in view of *Kato* (USPN 6,665, 446 B1).

Regarding claims 9-10 and 15. *Kato* teaches (col. 10, lines 28-32) that neural networks and genetic algorithms are art equivalents and the basic training of a neural network inherently consists of getting input training data, comparing output data with desired values, and acting accordingly with the comparison. Official Notice is taken of the user of a back-propagation algorithm.

7. Claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Singh et al.* in view of *Wormington et al.* as set forth above and further in view of *Sirat et al.* (EPN 0 448 890 A1).

Regarding claim 7. Using principal component analysis to transform machine-learning system output data is taught (*see* p. 2, lines 39-41) by *Sirat et al.* It would have been obvious at the time the invention was made, to persons having ordinary skill in the art, to combine *Singh et al.* with *Sirat et al.* to obtain fewer and simpler calculations per iteration during training.

8. Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Singh et al.* in view of *Wormington et al.* and further in view of *Gahegan et al.*, "Dataspaces as an organizational concept for the neural classification of geographic datasets", 1999.

Regarding claim 8. *Singh et al.* teaches the method of claim 7. *Gahegan et al.* teaches the method, further comprising: dividing the dimensions of the training output data into a first partition and at least a second partition (*see* Fig. 2, *Examiner asserts that any training data is applied to the first (input) layer of units for training and that the second layer of units partitions the feature space of the first layer of units.*), wherein a first machine learning system is configured and trained for the first partition, and a second machine learning system is configured and trained for the second partition (*see* Fig. 2, *Examiner asserts that the self-organizing map neural networks in the third layer are configured to be trained (separately) for a first and second partition of the dimensions of the input space.*). It would have been obvious at the time the invention was made, to persons having ordinary skill in the art, to combine *Singh et al.* with *Gahegan et al.* to apply a 'divide and conquer' approach to training, wherein a different metric or model can be applied to each feature (dimension) sub-space according to its specific structure.

Applicant's argument with respect to claim 8 has been considered but is moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

## Response to Arguments

9. Applicant's arguments filed for claims 1, 16, and 22 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicants assessment of the prior art is agreed with, to the extent that *Wormington et al.* uses a machine learning technique. However, it is considered that *Wormington et al.'s* method generates a second diffraction signal. Although, *Wormington et al.* includes the step of creating parameter vectors to create the diffraction signal, applicant's claimed invention is not so limited as to exclude *Wormington et al.* Applicant should note, that the transitional phrases in each of the independent claims, is an open transitional phrase which allows the reference to include additional steps that are not claimed. Furthermore, the simulation of *Wormington et al.* is considered to be the second diffraction signal, since there is nothing within the claims to prohibit this interpretation.

## Correspondence Information

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Nathan H. Brown, Jr. whose telephone number is 571-272- 8632. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 0830-1700. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Anthony Knight can be reached on 571-272-3687. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained

from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Anthony Knight
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Tech Center 2100

Nathan H. Brown, Jr.
February 13, 2006